



Recognition and Prevention of Workplace Violence



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Purpose

- To give you...

- An overview of the indicators to identify a potential for workplace violence

- The actions and tools available to help prevent the escalation of problems to the level of workplace violence, and

- An understanding of how we deal with potential and actual workplace violence



Workplace Violence Is...

- Any verbal threat to harm another person or destroy property
- Any actual physical aggression
- Any behavior which would be interpreted by a reasonable person as potentially violent
- Any harassment which makes others feel unsafe, which could include sexual harassment



Identifying Problem Situations



- Direct or veiled threats
- Numerous conflicts with others
- Inappropriate and aggressive behavior
- Inappropriate references to guns
- Fascination with incidents of workplace violence

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Identifying Problem Situations

- Statements indicating approval of the use of violence or statements indicating identification with perpetrators of workplace homicides
- Statements indicating desperation (over family, work, financial, and other personal problems) to the point of contemplating suicide
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Extreme changes in behaviors

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Warning signs are present in 84% of workplace violence episodes involving disgruntled employees.

Workplace Negativity & Stress



Contributing factors that may precipitate problematic behavior:



- Understaffing that leads to job overload or compulsory overtime
- Frustrations arising from poorly defined job tasks and responsibilities
- Downsizing or reorganization
- Labor disputes and poor-management relations

Workplace Negativity & Stress



- Poor management styles
 - Examples: arbitrary or unexplained orders; over-monitoring; corrections or reprimands in front of other employees, inconsistent discipline
- A lack of employee counseling
- A high injury rate or frequent grievances may be clues to problem situations in a workplace
- Disciplinary actions, including termination

Possible Domestic Abuse


If The Employee :


- ✓ Has unexplained bruises
- ✓ Has trouble concentrating
- ✓ Receives repeated and, upsetting telephone calls during the day
- ✓ Frequently appears anxious, upset, or depressed
- ✓ Quality of work fluctuates for no apparent reason
- ✓ Misses work often





Procedure for Reporting Incidents



 **Recognize** early warning signs and effectively intervene. The Employee Assistance Program is an appropriate resource for helping to prevent problems from escalating.

 **Address** problem behaviors promptly.

 **Report** unacceptable behavior to a supervisor, manager, the Employee Relations Office, Protective Services, or any member of the Threat Assessment Advisory Group.

 **Call** 911 for all emergencies.



Threat Assessment Advisory Group



- Has the responsibility to *investigate* the situation, *analyze* the risk, and determine effective *management* of the situation
- Group members from the: Office of Human Capital, Office of Center Operations, Office of the Chief Counsel, and other representatives, as needed, such as supervisors
- The Group meets at least once a month

Dealing With Potentially Violent People



Guidelines:

- ❖ The most important initial consideration is to remain calm if at all possible.
- ❖ Potentially violent individuals may have difficulty controlling their feelings/behavior, or may use the threat of violence as a tool to obtain their goal.
- ❖ Uncontrolled demonstrations of anxiety may antagonize either of these dynamics.
- ❖ It is imperative to avoid anything that might threaten or provoke a potentially violent person.
- ❖ Behavior construed as threatening or demeaning will complicate any attempted resolution, and may elicit overt aggression.
- ❖ The goal should always be to defuse a potentially violent situation by an empathic and non-threatening approach.



Guidelines *(continued)*

- ❖ An employer may be firm in his position and still be empathic and understanding. A “tough” approach is not likely to de-escalate a potentially violent situation, and in fact is more likely to bring it about.
- ❖ The threatening person should always be treated with respect and dignity, even if the natural inclination is to denigrate the person.
- ❖ Acknowledgement of the person’s frustration and anger and expressions that the problem can be resolved will engage the person in dialog.
- ❖ Requests for the person’s input on how the situation can be remedied will focus the person on alternatives to violence.
- ❖ Genuine dialog, without artificiality or contrivance, will legitimize the discussion and diffuse any underlying rage.

For more information, contact:

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Protective Services Practices



It is standard MSFC procedure to have a member of Protective Services present for a Civil Service disciplinary action

Protective Services also offers this service to Contractors



Protective Services Procedures

- MSFC has an established, trained and exercised response procedure. The procedure has been updated based on lessons learned from the JSC incident.
- In the event of a 911 call, officers respond in 2-4 minutes and call in additional support as needed.
- The electronic warning system (loudspeaker) is one means of announcing appropriate actions for employees in a potentially violent situation. Among possible instructions are Shelter In Place or Building evacuation.
- Law enforcement response to situations on MSFC is authorized. Procedures to coordinate other support as necessary are routinely practiced.



What Can You Do?

- Call 911 if you feel threatened in your workplace.



- Safeguard your badge and do not allow piggybacking. In the event of an emergency, the badge reader data will be used to identify who has entered a building.
- Be proactive about addressing warning signs. Many potential situations are resolvable before they turn violent.
- Use the Employee Assistance Program and the Threat Assessment Advisory Group to help work through potential problems.





**For more information contact the
Protective Services Community Resource Office.**



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